

## Primavera [15]

2025 Italy/France 110 mins

UK released **24 April 26**

Director **Damiano Michieletto**

Screenplay **Ludovica Rampoldi (based on book by Tiziano Scarpa)**

Cinematography **Daria D'Antonio**

Music **Fabio Massimo Capogrosso**

Cast **Tecla Insolia (Cecilia); Michele Riondino (Antonio Vivaldi); Andrea Pennacchi (Governor); Fabrizia Sacchi (Prioress); Valentina Bellè (Elisabetta Parolin)**

Adapted from Tiziano Scarpa's 2008 work *Stabat Mater*, a historical fiction novel with the same premise, Damiano Michieletto's *Primavera* allows the acclaimed Italian stage and opera director to take his first step into the film world. He begins this journey with a work still rooted firmly in music, set in early 18th-century Venice. With a story conceived by Ludovica Rampoldi and the director himself, and a screenplay by Rampoldi, the tale intersects with the life of the most famous Baroque composer of all time, Antonio Vivaldi. *Primavera* emerges as rough in character development but appealing to a theatre lover's aesthetic sensibilities, thanks mainly to Michieletto's grasp of the form. Granted, this is a story inspired by the legacy of Vivaldi, and not about the composer himself: fittingly, we never hear the titular movement of *The Four Seasons* until the credits hit.

Tecla Insolia (the star of the six-part Italian miniseries *The Art of Joy*, armed with an Ana de Armas-like smile) leads as Cecilia, a talented late-teen violinist at the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, a convent and orphanage where girls and young women were taught music, and formed part of well-known choral and orchestral ensembles. Historically, the Ospedale was known as the venue where Vivaldi – played here by Michele Riondino – taught for decades. However, Michieletto's Vivaldi – or rather, Don Antonio, as we know him – is a peculiar, even at first sickly, man, albeit handsome and clearly musically gifted.

Upon being hired as the new music teacher and composer, Vivaldi immediately takes a liking to Cecilia, in whom he sees not merely skill, but also humility, and the two become quiet confidants. Cecilia's threefold battle takes us into her search for her mother, through her impending marriage to a wealthy older military officer, and into her renewed love for music in light of Vivaldi's adoration. However, hardly a spot of intrigue passes between the two other than bits of dialogue in Cecilia's secret hideout, which makes it hard to root for them either as mutually adoring teacher and student or – the film dares to ask – as a potential romantic pair. Sporadic close-ups of nervous hands only go so far as to create the air of suggestion.

Despite the complexity of the narrative, neither Cecilia nor Vivaldi emerge as convincing protagonists, leaving us to admire the lush production detail and Michieletto's stage background. Period costumes by Maria Rita Barbera and Gala Calderone focus more on capturing the stifling, conservative environment of the Ospedale, rather than standing out on their own. It's also a relief to have a director who knows how to direct instrument-playing with true realism, which we immediately see in one of the earliest scenes of Vivaldi challenging his new students to play an increasingly difficult passage. Nonetheless, even with Fabio Massimo Capogrosso's Baroque-inspired original music, Primavera never reaches the fever pitch of emotion we might expect inspired by the fervour and passion we are told was exuded by Vivaldi himself.

**Olivia Popp**, *Cineuropa*, 17 September 2025

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